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## FOLLIES AND HORRORS OF WAR.

BY THE RIGHT REV. WILLIAM CROSWELL DOANE, BISHOP OF  
ALBANY.

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“FIRST the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear.” It is neither parody nor paraphrase, but I think a fair application of this natural law, as it is revealed to us in both the books of God—Nature and the Holy Scriptures—to say, first the toy-drum, then the school drill, and then the militia company. What does this mean as to the tendency of the human animal, and as to the right method of his training? Making all allowance for the attraction of “pomp and pageantry,” for the boy’s love of noise, for the joy of the martial strut, for the glory of the gorgeous uniform, is there not in it evidence of the inherent instinct of fighting? And if there is, ought it to be developed, or ought it to be discouraged? Nobody can know much of most of our big schools, nobody can witness the scene or read the story of a football game, and not see how quickly, in most young natures, the wrestling match or the rivalry of sides begets the heat of anger and the act of violence; and again one says, ought these athletic games to be encouraged or forbidden? And the question is not easy to answer. As developing strength and independence and courage they have great value. I think the true solution is that they ought to be encouraged and directed toward the splendid virtue of self-control; until a boy would rather be flung in the wrestling, or lose the game of ball, than conquer in either one by an act of violence, for which he got the sudden strength by the rush of an animal passion flushing him into fury.

The drift of this inquiry is toward the discovery of some reason for the widespread instantaneousness, with which the American

people hailed the possibility, this winter, of a war with England. Does it mean that there is a pan-American hatred of England? I do not believe it. The spirit of 1896 is not the spirit of 1776. Some Irish people who have brought over here their old grudges, and a few natives, who have been called "pinch-beck patriots," mistake pat-riotism for patriotism, and when they use the fine phrase, "I am an American," mean "I am an anti-Anglican." But the number is comparatively small. And when I look on the other side of the water, where surprise and astonishment more slowly accept the thought, it is only to see that the mob in the concert halls are quite ready to cheer for a fight in the Transvaal. It seems, therefore, as if the brute lay very near the skin of our humanity; so near as to need not even "scratching," but only tickling, to discover it. It looks as if the love of battle were instinctive in man. I confess it appears to me to mean that after all these centuries, in the very finest product of Christian civilization, the influence of religion is only skin deep. Looking at the excitement in America, whether you begin with the needless violence of the President's message, forcing, what on the face of it was a friendly offer, with a threat; or look at the next stage, the delirious discussion and the decision of the two Houses instantly, and with only a voice or two of warning, to accept and provide for the possibility of war; or at the mad panic which made men really "bulls and bears" in Wall Street; or at the way in which, with one or two most honorable exceptions, the press of the country and the unthinking mass of the population greeted the idea,—take it wherever it manifested itself, it seems to mean that fighting is congenial to humanity. Certainly if a popular excitement can be kindled to white heat in an instant, by a few unwise words at the end of a wise suggestion, in favor of such a moral impossibility, such an immoral possibility, as a war between America and England; certainly if war can be either suggested or accepted as a remedy to be resorted to by the United States of America, in order to prevent the damage done to our American institutions by Great Britain's claim to a few square miles more or less of South American land, which are also claimed by that travesty of a republic, with a caricature of government, Venezuela; certainly if the third party, offering unasked advice, in a dispute between two other parties, is justified in saying, and saying to the satisfaction of the people, that unless somebody arbitrates

in this remote dispute, the third party will take up arms and force the issue—I see no other explanation but that average human nature is all the time spoiling for a fight. I am unwilling to acknowledge that the only influence which can arrest or control this political hysteria should be the influence of money. The concession of gold fields to American citizens in Venezuela, and the sobering effect of the scare in Wall Street, look now as if gold were the cause, and were likely to be the cure, of this commotion. “*Sacra auri fames*,” the poet said ! And this materialistic age of ours acts, as if that meant “the holy” and not “the accursed” hunger for gold. Let us get the whole matter on a higher ground.

I am not discussing the abstract question of the ethical right or wrong of war. I believe that the ethics of nations are founded on the same principles as the ethics of individuals. A multiplication of men does not produce any other moral code than that which each man receives. Even magisterially this is true. The nation represented by its sovereign authority, or the individual whom the law makes judge or sheriff, may take life without committing murder ; but multiplying right or wrong by millions merely makes the right or the wrong million-fold, and does not make wrong right. And I believe that the man or the nation which provokes strife, or strikes the first blow, commits sin. In the universal fallibility of human judgment—made inevitably more fallible by national prejudice—it cannot be assumed that the position of one nation is *entirely* right and of the other *entirely* wrong ; or that the wrong of the one makes the other right. And it must follow that the wise course is to let some other fallibility, which is unprejudiced, pick out the right and point out the wrong, which must inevitably be combined like tares with wheat, in each position. But that picking and that pointing must be done by something that is more delicate and human, than the pointing of the sword and the picking of a bayonet. Neither am I contending for the principle that war is always an unpardonable wrong. *If* religion ruled, *if* Christianity had conquered, *if* the Christ were really king, *if* the Gospel had leavened the world, *if* either the summary of the Law, or the Sermon on the Mount were the standards of life, then war would be impossible. Alas, none of these things is true ! And the street brawl, and the stealthy dagger, and the quick blow, and the prompt pistol are,

no more and no less, than standing armies, and "the tented field," and the carnage of battle, evidence that the world has not yet "gone after Christ." But surely the utmost straining of what is called the right of self-defence in a man, the extremest application of the maintenance of what is called national honor, cannot justify, before God or man, in the interests of humanity or religion, any resort to war except in the very last emergency, and for the actual preservation of personal or national life.

Omitting from the consideration the positive necessity of rescuing the Armenians from the uncontrolled and unutterable cruelty of the Turks ; omitting the question of a resistance by arms to a tyranny enforced by arms ; omitting the question of opposing army to army, when the unity, which is the life of a nation, is threatened ; what can be more *irrational* than war, as a means of settling disputes between nations and peoples. A quarrel is very often, at least, about some abstract question, which in no sense affects the prosperity of the mass of the people ; and yet hundreds and thousands of men are summoned and sent to lay their lives down ; and, when the resources of one or the other side are exhausted, then the question at issue is settled ; *not* by reason, *not* by justice, *not* by principle, *not* by argument, *not* by the facts of the case, but by either force of numbers or skill in generalship. And whatever gain accrues comes not to the dead, but to the stronger survivors of the quarrel. We have come to feel this about that relic of barbarism, the duel ; and the cold-blooded preparation to kill, wholesale or retail, in order to avenge or to sustain what is called honor, is unreasoning and indefensible, on principle, in a man or in a nation.

What are they ? What can paint or what can describe them ? The sacrifice of precious lives, the desolation of hearts, the desecration of homes, the ruin of fortunes, the wreck of prosperity, the arrest of the plough in the furrow, that the dead may be buried where the wheat should have been planted, the arts and occupations of peace given up or giving place to the preparation of the sinews of war, commerce destroyed, industries paralyzed, panic where there had been confidence, passion taking the place of reason, and a temper roused, of violence and hatred and revenge, which leaves its trace upon the character of the whole people long after the restoration of peace. I wonder if everybody has forgotten Southey's Blenheim verses with their combi-

nation of poetry and philosophy, with their fine irony of common sense, and with a little leavening of Christianity. Old Kaspar takes the skull which the boy had found :

“ It’s some poor fellow’s skull, said he,  
Who fell in that great victory.”

And when the children asked about the war :

“ And what they fought each other for ? ”

he answers :

“ I could not well make out ;  
But everybody said, quoth he,  
It was a famous victory.”

And then comes the pitiful recital of burnt dwellings, fleeing households, the country “wasted far and wide” with fire and sword, and the shocking sight after the field was won.

“ For many thousand bodies there lay rotting in the sun.”

And the only refrain to the children’s questions, “ What good came of it at last ? ” and to their suggestion of its wickedness was,

“ Why, that I cannot tell, quoth he,  
But t’was a famous victory.”

History will make Kaspar’s record of more than one of the famous battles of the world. And if the question ever is to be asked or answered about this suppositious war between England and America, the answer will be as difficult as Kaspar’s, and more disgraceful. Just now, like the Ephesians, who cried out “ with one voice about the space of two hours, Great is Diana of the Ephesians ! ” the greater part not knowing wherefore, our people are crying out, “ Great is the Monroe Doctrine ! ” A *doctrine*, not a principle, not a law ; an opinion of a man borrowed from England, refused adoption by the Congress to which it was proposed ; relating to the long-forgotten fear of some establishment on this continent of monarchical institutions, which might injure the republican principles of America ! Banquo’s ghost is a substantial personality beside it.

WM. CROSWELL DOANE.